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It's software for your people. (SkillView Technologies' SkillView 2.0 tracks employee skills) (Software Review)(Brief Article)(Evaluation)

Greiner, Lynn

Computing Canada, v24, n6, p34(1)

Feb 16, 1998

Text:

Want to track what skills your future and present employees have (or need)? Consider SkillView

As a company grows, it becomes more and more difficult to keep track not only of what skills employees have to offer, but what skills are actually required to perform their jobs. Projects are often staffed by something akin to throwing darts at a list of people.

SkillView Technologies' SkillView 2.0 is designed to bridge some of those gaps.

It's a client-server program that can run standalone or over a network attached to an industrial-strength DBMS like Oracle, Sybase, SQL Server, OpenIngres or Informix, or to a product like Paradox or Access. The standalone desktop version comes with a copy of Sybase SQL Anywhere.

It is based on the concept of Skills-based Management, a philosophy, according to company founder Hank Riehl, that "it is about skills, staff competence in those skills and how skills relate to the IS business plan."

It allows employees and their managers to track company-defined skill sets (everything from programming expertise to conflict management and supervisory skills) attached to various job functions and to rate themselves (and have their supervisors and peers validate those ratings) on their competency in each skill.

These ratings are matched against the benchmarks for the position (in essence, a fairly detailed job description), and gaps calculated so the inquirer can see where additional training or experience is needed.

Skills can be weighted by their importance for a given position. For example, C programming skills may have a high weight for a technical employee, and a low weight for an executive who isn't expected to program as part of his or her job. In addition, summary reports can be produced that pinpoint an entire department's skills gap. Another use for the program is in staffing project teams.

Required skills can be matched against the skill sets of available employees, to find the best matches.

Reports are predefined. But extensive, and range from a graphical competency distribution to a list of employees needing "learning events." However, you can't request a preview of a report before you print it, and, aside from altering the sort order, filtering on specified fields, and hiding a few fields, the reports cannot really be customized. This is intentional.

Security is extensive and the system administrator can choose the

extent of any user's access.

The user interface features big push buttons and list selections using radio buttons.

On the whole, it's easy to pick up without documentation, though there are a few spots where it's unclear how to proceed. And, in Windows 95 using a 1,024 by 768 resolution with large fonts, the text and graphics on the buttons mutate in a rather astonishing way. SkillView says this is a glitch in the PowerBuilder development tool. Luckily, the buttons' functions are not affected.

Overall, though, SkillView provides a simple-to-use way for all levels of a company to monitor the match of its employees (or applicants) to their jobs, and to help in the important function of succession planning.

Lynn Greiner is senior manager, computer services for The NPD Group Canada Inc. in Toronto. She welcomes your feedback at lynng@inforamp.net.

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Monday, February 16, 1998

Vol. 24, No. 6

It's software for your people
Greiner, Lynn

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---- INDEX REFERENCES ----

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